

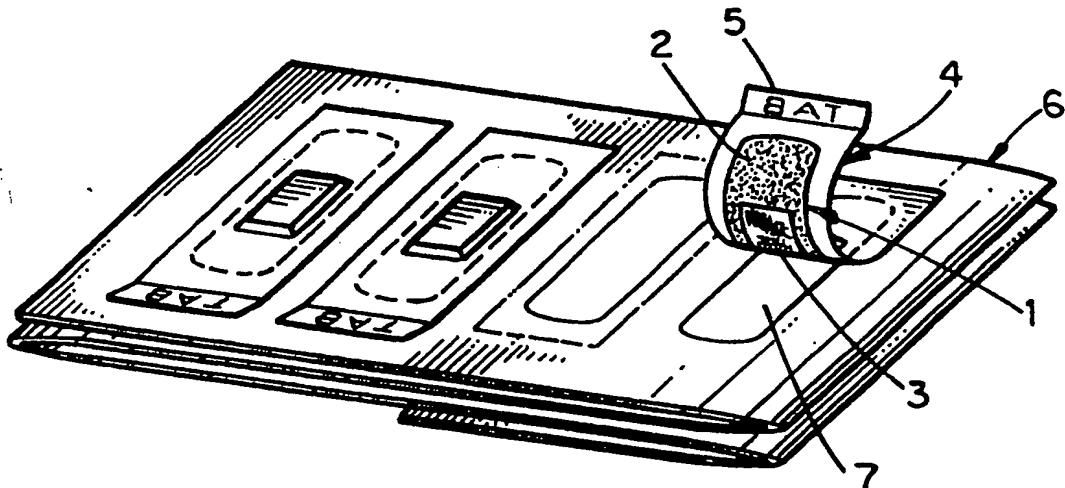
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(54) Title: PAKAGING AND DISPENSING DEVICE FOR STERILE ARTICLES



(57) Abstract

The present invention provides an encased article combination that includes a support member (100, 6, 53, 71), a cover member (104, 4, 50, 72), and an encased article (101, 1, 52, 70). The encased article is in the form of adhesive bandages (1), chemical applicator pads (52), and doses of medicine (70). In particular, the invention in part allows access to and use of such items with a single hand.

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10 **PACKAGING AND DISPENSING DEVICE FOR STERILE ARTICLES**

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25 This invention relates to a dispensing device for sterile articles such as adhesive bandage strips, chemical applicator pads, and medication. More particularly, this invention permits one-handed access, removal, and application or use of adhesive bandages, chemical substances, or medication.

30 While adhesive-backed articles such as adhesive bandage strips are known in the art, they are commonly sealed in sterile, individual wrappings and packaged within paper or metal boxes. Examples include the well-known "Band-Aid®" brand bandage strips. While popular, these products suffer certain disadvantages such as the fact that the bandages themselves can be difficult to remove from the wrappings and difficult to apply to the desired location. The user generally must remove the bandage from the wrapping, remove the nonstick layers from the

adhesive portion of the bandage and then attempt to apply the bandage to the desired location in its sanitary and sterile condition without the bandage curling or adhering to itself.

5 Previous attempts to improve upon this concept include U.S. Patent No. 4,993,586 to Taulbee, et al., which discloses a bandage dispenser device in which a continuous strip is grasped with one hand and a bandage is removed with the other hand. This is accomplished by the use of a continuous strip with a first and second layer. Bandages are placed on sterile mounting pads affixed to the first
10 layer. The bandages and the first layer are then enclosed by a second layer and stacked or rolled within a container. In use, the sheet is pulled through a splicer attached to the container that cuts the first and second layers. The second layer is then lifted and removed. The first layer is then grasped with one hand and a bandage is removed with the other.

15 U.S. Patent No. 5,133,477 to Etheredge, et al. also discloses a bandage dispensing device employing the use of a continuous strip. The strip has a nonstick coating upon which one end of a bandage is affixed. The other end of the bandage and the cotton gauze area of the bandage are covered with a release
20 sheet. In use, the continuous sheet is grasped with one hand the bandage is grasped and removed with the other hand. The bandage is then applied to the desired location by affixing the exposed half to the skin. Once applied, this end of the bandage is held in place while the release sheet is removed from the bandage and the other end of the bandage is applied to the skin.

25 Despite these and other prior art devices, there remains a need for a packaging and dispensing device for adhesive-coated articles, such as adhesive bandage strips, by which the article may be grasped with one hand from the front of dispenser and then applied, also one-handedly, to the desired location without
30 the article curling or adhering to itself. Both Taulbee and Etheredge require the use of two hands to remove and apply a bandage strip, and neither addresses the

problem of the bandage strip curling or adhering to itself. Further, the device disclosed by Taulbee would entail considerable manufacturing costs due to the splicer structure. Similarly, there is still a need for a packaging and dispensing device that allows convenient, and in some cases, one-handed access to sanitary applicators and doses of medication.

While the prior art has improved upon access to sanitary articles, there is a need for both improved access to the article and improved applicability of the article. As an example, a lab technician who is drawing blood from a patient 10 could use the improved access to such articles to apply an adhesive bandage strip with one hand while maintaining pressure on the puncture with the other.

Similarly, there remains a need for a device used for the application of chemical substances such as alcohol, makeup, sunscreen and other lotions, 15 antiseptics and medicaments to the skin of the human body in a sterile and sanitary fashion with the use of a single hand. Additionally, there is also a need for convenient, and in some cases, one-handed access to doses of medicine.

The encased article combination of this invention includes a support 20 member, a cover member and an encased article. The encased articles may be packaged either individually, as an assemblage of articles, or as an assemblage of articles in a dispensing device. In one embodiment of this invention the encased article is an adhesive coated article such as a conventional adhesive bandage or other form of wound dressing. In other embodiments of this invention the article 25 is an applicator for chemicals, such as medicines, cosmetics, ointments, salves and the like. In yet another embodiment of this invention pills, capsules, or capelets, or other forms of medicinal dosage units are enclosed for dispensing.

The support member of this invention may take the form of a continuous 30 sheet, coated or uncoated, or a series of molded housings for the articles to be

dispensed. In the most preferred embodiments the support member is flexible so that it can be loaded into a dispensing device in folded or rolled form.

5 The cover member of this invention is typically adhered to the support member to form the encasement for the article. In certain preferred embodiments the cover member has either one or two adhesive coatings for releasable adherence to the support member and to the encased article. In another preferred embodiment the cover member includes means for gripping the cover member for removal to enable one-handed application or use of the encased device.

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In the practice of this invention it is important that the assembly of the support member, the cover member and the encased article form bonds of appropriate adhesive strengths to ensure correct release characteristics. A first adhesive bond is typically formed between the support member and the adhesive surface of the encased article. Such a first bond is typically found in the adhesive bandage encasement embodiment of this invention. A second adhesive bond is formed between the support member and the cover member. A third adhesive bond is formed between the cover member and the encased article. It is important that the third adhesive bond (between the cover member and the encased article) 15 be adhesively stronger than either the first or second adhesive bond. This relationship of the first, second, and third adhesive bonds is important to the practice of this invention. Likewise, it is important that the third adhesive bond be weaker than the bond between the adhesive surface of the encased article and the surface to which it is ultimately applied (recipient surface).

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Generally, the present invention comprises an apparatus for packaging and dispensing a sterile article such as an adhesive bandage, a swab-type or sponge-like applicator that may be pretreated with the substance to be applied, or a dose of medicine.

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In the present invention, adhesive-coated items are encased within self-contained, sanitary packaging. The adhesive-coated item, such as an adhesive bandage usually has two substantially flat sides. The bottom (or adhesive) side or surface, which is the side applied to the skin in the case of standard adhesive 5 bandages, is coated at least in part with a first adhesive and typically has a sanitary pad affixed thereto.

The adhesive-coated article such as an adhesive bandage is packaged by sandwiching the item between a dispensing support structure, layer, or sheet and a 10 cover layer or strip. The adhesive-coated article is removably adhered to the support sheet by the first adhesive, which forms a first bond with the support sheet. The length and width dimensions of the support sheet exceed those of the adhesive-coated article. Alternatively, sterile, nonstick mounting pads may be affixed to the support sheet and an adhesive-coated article such as an adhesive 15 bandage may instead be removably adhered to each of the mounting pads. If the support sheet is made of suitable material, then nonstick mounting pads are not necessary.

The packaging or encasement is further accomplished by forming or 20 removably adhering a cover structure or layer, which also exceeds the dimensions of the adhesive-coated article, both to the top surface of the adhesive-coated article and to an additional peripheral area of the support sheet surrounding the article. A second adhesive may be used to removably adhere the cover layer to the top surface of the adhesive-coated article by forming a second bond therebetween. 25 The second adhesive forms an additional bond between the peripheral area of the cover strip extending beyond the edges of the adhesive-coated article and the corresponding peripheral area of the support sheet. The second bond, that formed between the adhesive-coated article and the cover strip, is of greater strength than the first bond, that between the adhesive-coated article and the support sheet, so 30 that when the cover strip is removed, usually by grasping a tab portion of the cover strip or any other suitable gripping means attached to the cover strip, the

adhesive-coated article is detached from the support sheet, while the top surface of the adhesive-coated article remains removably attached to the cover strip.

5 The adhesive-coated article can then be transported to and applied to the receiving surface, such as the human skin, with single handed use of the cover strip. Once the bottom surface of the adhesive-coated article, containing the first adhesive, is applied to the receiving surface, the first adhesive forms a strong bond between the receiving surface and the bottom surface of the article such that the strength of this bond with the receiving surface exceeds that of the bond between 10 the cover layer and the top surface of the article so that subsequent pulling force exerted upon the cover layer will cause the cover layer to become detached from the top surface of the article, thereby leaving the article suitably applied to the receiving surface.

15 In another form, the present invention comprises an apparatus for packaging and dispensing a swab-type or sponge-like applicator, which is packaged by sandwiching it between a support structure, layer, or sheet and a cover structure, layer, or strip. In this application, the swab-type or sponge-like applicator, such as a piece of gauze, cotton, cloth, sponge, or other material is 20 attached to a cover strip having length and width dimensions that exceed those of the applicator. The cover strip is attached to the applicator with an adhesive or some other suitable means of attachment. A peripheral area of the cover strip surrounding the applicator is coated with an adhesive which forms a temporary bond between the peripheral area of the cover strip extending beyond the edges of 25 the applicator and the corresponding peripheral area of the support sheet. When the cover strip is pulled, the applicator is removed with the cover sheet, thereby exposing the applicator so that it may be moved to the receiving surface. The applicator can be pretreated with antiseptics, lotions, sunscreens, makeup or any medicament or other chemical to be applied, but does not necessarily have to be 30 pretreated.

In yet another form, the present invention comprises an apparatus for packaging and dispensing doses of medicine such as capsules, capelets, pills, or other units of medicine. In this embodiment, capsules, for example, are packaged in trays which function as the support member and which contain troughs for holding the capsules. The capsules are further packaged with the use of a cover sheet which is removably adhered to at least the peripheral area of the trays. The package may or may not include an additional, protective, thin burstable film between the cover sheet and the capsules. The inner dimensions of the troughs may or may not be slightly smaller than the outer dimensions of the capsules in at least one dimension. If the troughs are slightly smaller than the capsules, then the user must exert force on the troughs to eject the capsules once the troughs have been removed from the cover layer with the use of a tab or other suitable gripping means attached to or formed as part of the tray. If the troughs are of the same or equal size as the capsules, then a portion of the underside of the cover layer may be coated with a temporary adhesive that removably adheres the capsules to the cover layer and removes the capsules from the troughs when the cover layer is removed.

Embodiments of this invention include the individual packaging and dispensing of individual or multiple adhesive bandages of virtually any shape, or applicators as well as the packaging and dispensing of multiple bandages, applicators, or doses of medicine positioned on individual or continuous sheets or rolls or in trays packed within a dispenser.

The dispenser itself may be a desktop or wall-mounted refillable container constructed of metal, plastic or paper. The dispenser has an opening or a window to provide access to sterile, individually wrapped adhesive bandages or applicators affixed to single or continuous sheets or rolls, or doses of medicine in trays formed from single or continuous sheets or rolls. A continuous support sheet of bandages or applicators may be layered or rolled in the bottom of the dispenser and fed across the dispenser window so that the leading end of the sheet either

5 exits through one end of the dispenser or is attached to a spool. As the bandage strips or applicators are removed via the access window and used, the support sheet may be pulled through the aperture or the spool may be turned, thus exposing additional bandages or applicators in the dispenser window. If medicine is dispensed then single sheets or multiple layers of single sheets of trays of medicine may be loaded into the dispenser and the trays may be accessed through the access window for use.

10 An aperture may be in addition to or instead of the access window. The aperture allows single or multiple packaged bandages, applicators or packets of medicine to be dispensed from one side of the dispenser for immediate or subsequent use. In a dispenser containing both an access window and an aperture, the aperture also allows the packaging material remaining from bandages, applicators, or pills accessed through the access window to be removed and discarded.

15 Thus, it is an object of the present invention to provide an improved package and dispenser for sterile articles such as adhesive bandages, chemical applicators, and doses of medicine.

20 It is also an object of present invention to provide a device that allows the user to apply a common sterile adhesive bandage or chemical substance using only one hand in the process of removing the bandage or substance applicator from the dispenser and applying it to the desired location.

25 It is a further object of this invention to provide an apparatus for application of a bandage strip to its desired location with the use of a single hand without the bandage strip curling or adhering to itself.

30 Yet another object of this invention is to provide an apparatus for the application of a chemical substance to a surface with the use of a single hand.

It is still a further object of the invention to provide a convenient dispenser which displays several adhesive bandages or substance applicators for immediate use, eliminates the handling of individually wrapped bandages or substance applicators, and reduces the amount of immediately discarded wrapping material.

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Other objectives, features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent upon reading the following specification, when taken in conjunction with the drawings and the claims.

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FIG. 1 is an exploded side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of an adhesive-coated article encased according to the present invention.

FIG. 2 is an exploded side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of an adhesive coated article encased according to the present invention.

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FIG. 3 is a side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of an adhesive coated article encased according to the present invention.

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FIG. 4 is an exploded side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of a sterile article encased according to the present invention.

FIG. 5 is a side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of a sterile article encased according to the present invention.

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FIG. 6 is a perspective view showing an adhesive bandage strip removably adhered to a cover strip containing a pull tab.

FIG. 7 is a perspective view showing the positioning of adhesive bandage strips and non-continuous cover strips on a continuous support layer.

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FIG. 8 is a perspective view showing the positioning of adhesive bandage strips and continuous cover strips on a continuous support layer.

5 FIG. 9 is an exploded perspective view of a single adhesive bandage strip encased according to the present invention.

FIG. 10 is a perspective view showing the typical application of an adhesive bandage strip with a cover strip to a recipient's skin.

10 FIG. 11 is an exploded perspective view of one embodiment of a dispenser for adhesive bandages packaged on a continuous support member.

FIG. 12 is a side cut away view showing the dispenser of FIG. 11 packed with a fan folded continuous member of adhesive bandage strips.

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FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the dispenser of FIG. 11.

FIG. 14 is a perspective cut away view of one embodiment of a dispenser for adhesive bandages packaged on continuous support member.

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FIG. 15 is a perspective view of a portion of a dispenser for adhesive bandages packaged on a continuous support member.

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FIG. 16 is a cut away perspective view of a wall mounted dispenser containing a spool for dispensing adhesive-coated bandages packaged on a roll according to the present invention.

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FIG. 17 is a cut away perspective view of a wall mounted dispenser containing a roll of adhesive coated bandages on a roll packaged according to the present invention.

FIG. 18 is an exploded perspective view showing an applicator packaged according to the present invention.

5 FIG. 19 is an exploded perspective view showing a plurality of applicators packaged on a single support member according to the present invention.

FIG. 20 is a perspective view showing one embodiment of a dispenser for a plurality of applicators packaged on a single support member according to the present invention.

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FIG. 21 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a dispenser for dispensing the applicators shown in FIG. 19.

15 FIG. 22 is an exploded perspective view of one embodiment of capsules packaged according to the present invention.

FIG. 23 is an exploded perspective view of another embodiment of capsules packaged according to the present invention.

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FIG. 24 is a bottom perspective view of the packaged capsules shown in FIG. 23.

25 FIG. 25 is a perspective view of a user ejecting capsules packaged according to the present invention.

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FIG. 26 is a cut away perspective view of one embodiment of a dispenser for dispensing medicine packaged according to the present invention.

FIG. 27 is an exploded cut away perspective view of another embodiment of a dispenser for dispensing medicine packaged according to the present invention.

5 FIG. 1 is an exploded side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of an adhesive-coated article encased according to the present invention. FIG. 1 shows adhesive-coated article 101 having first adhesive surface 102 encased between support member 100 and cover member 104. A first adhesive bond removably adheres the first adhesive surface 102 and support member 100 by 10 first adhesive coating 103 disposed on first adhesive surface 102. Cover member 104 is removably adhered to support member 100 by the second adhesive coating 105 disposed therebetween and which forms a second adhesive bond therebetween.

15 FIG. 2 is an exploded side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of another embodiment of an adhesive-coated article encased according to the present invention. Adhesive-coated article 101 having first adhesive surface 102 is encased between support member 100 and cover member 104. A first adhesive bond removably adheres the first adhesive surface 102 and support member 100 by first adhesive coating 103 disposed on first adhesive surface 102. 20 Cover member 104 is removably adhered to support member 100 by second adhesive coating 105 disposed therebetween and which forms a second adhesive bond therebetween. Cover member 104 is also removably adhered to the adhesive-coated article 101 by third adhesive coating 106 which forms a third adhesive bond therebetween which is stronger than the second adhesive bond.

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FIG. 3 further shows the encased adhesive-coated article of FIG. 2 with the addition of contact between the appropriate layers and adhesives, and also shows the addition of means for gripping 107 to facilitate removal of cover member 104.

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FIG. 6 shows an application of the present invention to the packaging of an adhesive bandage strip. The adhesive bandage strip 1 is the adhesive-coated

article. The cover member in this embodiment is cover strip 4, as these terms may be used interchangeably in this configuration. The support member in this embodiment is support sheet 6. FIG. 6 shows a perspective view of an adhesive bandage strip 1 joined to a cover strip 4 with a pull tab 5. The adhesive bandage strip 1 is generally constructed of plastic, paper, or cloth material with an adhesive substance applied to the adhesive side 2 of the strip and a cotton gauze area 3 in the middle of this adhesive side 2 of the strip 1. A conventional adhesive bandage strip, such as the "Band-Aid®" brand bandage strip, may be used.

10 The adhesive bandage strip 1 is joined to a cover strip 4 by a temporary adhesive. Examples of the temporary adhesive substance include "DryLine™" temporary adhesive made by the Gillette Company. The cover strip 4 may be constructed of any suitable material, including paper or plastic. The temporary adhesive used to join the cover strip 4 to the adhesive bandage strip 1 forms a stronger bond between the cover strip and the bandage than the bond formed by the adhesive substance between the adhesive side 2 of the adhesive bandage strip 1 and the support sheet 6 of FIG. 7. The cover strip 4 also contains a suitable means for gripping, such as pull tab 5, for ease of removal, as explained below.

15 FIG. 7 is a perspective view showing the positioning of the adhesive bandage strips 1 and non-continuous cover strips 4 on a continuous support sheet 6. The continuous support sheet 6 may be constructed out of any suitable material, including paper or plastic. The support sheet 6 can be of any suitable length and can be fan folded as shown in FIG. 7, or rolled as shown in FIGS. 16 and 17.

20 FIG. 8 shows a perspective view of an embodiment of the invention in which adhesive bandage strips are dispensed on a fan folded continuous support sheet 6 and covered and dispensed with the use of continuous cover strips 18 formed by the perforation or cutting of a continuous cover layer 19.

In the embodiments utilizing either continuous or non-continuous cover strips, a variable number of sterile, nonstick mounting pads 7, as shown in FIG. 7, may be permanently affixed to or incorporated into the continuous support sheet 6. The sterile, nonstick mounting pads 7 are generally constructed out of paper, 5 such as the release liner-type paper manufactured by Rhinelander Paper Company. The adhesive bandage strips 1 are positioned on the sterile, nonstick mounting pads 7 such that the adhesive side 2 of a bandage strip 1 is in contact with the sterile, nonstick mounting pads 7. Alternatively, the continuous support sheet 6 itself can be treated with a nonstick substance such that the adhesive bandage strips 10 1 may be placed directly on the support sheet 6.

If non-continuous cover strips 4 are used as shown in FIG. 7, then a cover strip 4 is joined to each of the adhesive bandage strips 1 as discussed above. The cover strip 4, covers the adhesive bandage strip 1 and adheres to that area of the support sheet 6 immediately surrounding the adhesive bandage strip 1, such that 15 each adhesive bandage strip 1 is sealed within the cover strip 4 and the support sheet 1. This enclosure ensures that the adhesive bandage strips 1 remain sterile until use. The support sheet 6 may be scored or perforated between a predetermined number of packaged bandages so that individual or groups of 20 packaged bandages may be torn off for immediate or subsequent use as shown in FIGS. 14 and 15. This also allows the user to remove and discard portions of the support sheet 6 remaining after any number of bandages has been used.

If continuous cover strips 18 are used, as shown in FIG. 8, then a 25 continuous cover sheet 19 covers any number of adhesive bandage strips 1 and adheres to the area of the continuous support sheet 6 immediately surrounding each adhesive bandage strip 1, such that each adhesive bandage strip 1 is sealed between a portion of the continuous cover sheet 19 and the continuous support sheet 6, maintaining sterility. The continuous cover sheet 19 is cut or perforated 30 into individual cover strips 18 so that bandages 1 can be removed and applied individually.

In this embodiment, the continuous support sheet 6 and continuous cover sheet 19 may both be scored or perforated between any number of adhesive bandages 1 as shown in FIGS. 8 and 13, thereby allowing any number of packaged bandages to be removed individually or in groups and also allowing 5 removal of portions of the continuous support sheet 6 after any number of bandages 1 has been used.

FIG. 9 shows an exploded perspective view of an individual, packaged adhesive bandage that has been removed from a continuous support sheet of 10 adhesive bandages having perforations between bandages and that also has cover strips cut or perforated from a continuous cover sheet.

Referring to FIG. 7, in operation, the cover strip 4 is grasped via the pull tab 5. When the pull tab 5 is pulled, the adhesive bandage strip 1 and the cover strip 4 are peeled together from the continuous support sheet 6, or from 15 alternative, nonstick mounting pad 7 and the continuous support sheet 6. The temporary adhesive joining the bandage strip 1 and the cover strip 4 is of sufficient strength to overcome the bond between the adhesive side 2 of bandage strip 1 and sterile, nonstick mounting pad 7 or the support sheet. The adhesive 20 bandage strip 1, still backed by cover strip 4, is then applied to the desired location on the recipient's skin.

FIG. 10 is a perspective view showing the typical application of an adhesive bandage strip 1 with a cover strip 4 to a recipient's skin. Once the 25 adhesive bandage strip 1 is applied, because the temporary adhesive joining the adhesive bandage strip 1 and the cover strip 4 forms a bond that is weaker than the bond formed between the adhesive side 2 of bandage strip 1 and the recipient's skin, the cover strip 4 is peeled away from both the adhesive bandage strip 1 and the recipient's skin, thereby leaving the adhesive bandage strip 1 applied to the 30 recipient's skin. The cover strip 4 may then be discarded.

FIG. 11 is an exploded perspective view showing the elements of a dispenser 10 for the packaged bandages described. The dispenser 10 consists of a top half 11 defining an access window 12, a bottom half 13, a support ledge 14, a spool 15, and a knob 16. As shown, the support ledge 14 is positioned within top 5 half 11 directly underneath access window 12 and is supported by bottom half 13. The bottom half 13 is generally hollow so as to provide space for the packing of the continuous sheet 6. The spool 15 is generally located on one end of the lower half 13 and communicates with knob 16 on the exterior of the dispenser 10. Optionally, the dispenser 10 may also contain an aperture through which 10 prepackaged bandages, or portions of support sheet remaining from bandages accessed through the access window 12, may pass for use or discarding.

The dispenser 10 can be manufactured out of any suitable material including metal, plastic or paper. The dispenser 10 may be refillable and may be 15 used on a desktop or mounted to a wall.

FIG. 12 is a side cut away view showing a dispenser 10 packed with a fan folded continuous support sheet 6 of adhesive bandage strips 1. The continuous support sheet 6 is fed through and across support ledge 14 such that the adhesive 20 bandage strips 1 are exposed through access window 12. The leading end 8 of continuous support sheet 6 is attached to spool 15 such that the continuous support sheet 6 can be advanced by rotating knob 16 as the adhesive bandage strips 1 are removed. Alternatively, the leading end 8 of continuous support sheet 6 may be 25 fed through optional aperture 15a so that either packaged bandages can be removed for subsequent use, or portions of continuous support sheet 6 that remain after bandages have been removed via access window 12 may be removed and discarded.

FIG. 13 is a perspective view of the dispenser of FIGS. 11 and 12, 30 showing the optional dispensing aperture.

FIG. 14 shows an alternate embodiment of a dispenser for packaged bandages or other adhesive-coated articles, in which the dispenser contains an access window 12 and a dispensing aperture 15a, but does not contain a spool and knob. The continuous support sheet 6 may be pulled through the aperture 17 so as to advance the continuous support sheet 6 after adhesive bandage strips 1 are removed through the access window 12. Alternatively, the dispenser 10 may allow bandages packaged on the continuous support sheet 6, and which were not removed while exposed in the access window 12, to pass through the aperture 17 and be removed at perforations in the continuous support sheet 6 either 5 individually or in groups for later use.

FIG. 15 shows a perspective view of a portion of yet another embodiment of a dispenser for packaged bandages or other adhesive-coated articles. In this embodiment, multiple adhesive-coated articles are visible on access shelf 20.

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FIG. 16 shows a perspective cut away view of a wall-mounted dispenser for bandages or other adhesive-coated articles packaged according to the present invention, in which the assemblage of adhesive-coated articles is rolled.

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FIG. 17 shows a perspective cut away view of yet another embodiment of a dispenser for adhesive coated articles packaged according to the present invention, in which the assemblage of adhesive-coated articles is rolled. In this configuration, the dispenser contains no spool for coiling the remaining portions of the support sheet after removal of adhesive-coated articles.

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While the invention has been disclosed with respect to an adhesive bandage strips, it will be appreciated that the invention is equally well suited for other shapes of adhesive bandages as well as other types of adhesive-backed articles such as bumper stickers, adhesive-backed name tags, and the like.

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FIG. 4 is an exploded side view conceptually showing the layers and adhesives of a sterile article encased according to the present invention. A sterile article 133 is effectively encased for dispensing or distribution by its attachment to cover member 132. The sterile article 133 is further encased by removably adhering cover member 132 to support member 130 with first adhesive coating 131 to form an adhesive bond therebetween.

FIG. 5 is a conceptual side view of another embodiment of the present invention, showing a sterile article adhered to cover member 132 by second adhesive 134, forming a second bond therebetween. As in the embodiment of FIG. 4, the sterile article 133 is encased by removably adhering cover member 132 to support member 130 with the use of first adhesive coating 131 to form a first bond therebetween and functionally encase the sterile article 133.

FIG. 18 shows an exploded perspective view of an embodiment of the invention in which the sterile article is a chemical substance applicator 52 such as a cotton swab, a portion of gauze, sponge, cloth, or other material and is affixed to a cover 50 which serves as the cover member. The applicator 52 is further packaged by placement of the applicator 52 on a support sheet 53 which serves as the support member. The portion of the cover 50 extending beyond the periphery of the applicator 52 is coated with a temporary first adhesive which removably adheres that portion of the cover 50 to a corresponding region of the continuous support sheet 53, thereby sealing the applicator 52 in a sanitary package. The adhesive surrounding the applicator 52 used to removably adhere the periphery of the applicator 52 to the support sheet 53 may also be used to adhere the cover 50 to the applicator 52.

Multiple covers may be formed from a continuous sheet that is cut, scored, or perforated between adjacent applicators or they may be formed from separate pieces of material. The covers 50 may contain a corner-type tab 54 as shown in FIG. 18, an edge-type tab 55 as shown in FIG. 19, or any other means for gripping that

facilitates the removal of the cover 50 and applicator 52 from the support sheet 53. The cover 50 may contain an additional handle or gripping device on its surface to further assist the user in removing or holding the cover 50.

5 The applicator 52 may be pre-treated with any chemical substance to be applied such as antiseptics, makeup, lotions, medicaments or any other suitable substance for application. Alternatively, the applicator 52 may not be pre-treated. If the applicator 52 is pre-treated, then the user will pull the tab 55, thereby removing the applicator 52 from the support sheet 53, and exposing the applicator 10 52 for application to the recipient surface such as human skin. If the applicator 52 is not pre-treated, then after removal from the support sheet, the applicator 52 may be used as a sanitary wipe, or the user may apply any suitable substance such as bottled alcohol, makeup, or lotion, or any other suitable substance to the applicator and then apply the applicator to a recipient surface. In this 15 embodiment, it is contemplated that both pretreated and non-pretreated swabs will have application beyond the medical field and will provide a convenient swab or applicator for the application of any number of chemical substances in any number of commercial or household applications.

20 Applicators of this embodiment may be dispensed from single or continuous sheets or rolls. FIG. 19 shows an embodiment in which multiple applicators 52 are packaged on a single support sheet 53. The encased, or packaged, applicators of FIGS. 18 and 19 may be dispensed with the use of the dispensers of FIGS. 20 and 21 respectively. Alternatively, the encased articles 25 may be dispensed with dispensers not shown in the figures, but which may be similar or identical to the dispensers of FIGS. 14 and 15 in which any such articles may be dispensed via the aperture at the end of an access shelf of the dispenser. In yet another configuration not shown, such encased sterile articles may be dispensed on rolled sheets with dispensers similar or identical to the 30 dispensers of FIGS. 16 or 17.

FIG. 22 shows another embodiment in which the invention is used to dispense doses of medication such as capsules, capelets, pills, or other units of medicine. In this embodiment, a dosage of medicine, such as capsule 70, is packaged in dispensing tray 71 which functions as the support member and which contains holding troughs 73. In one embodiment, the size of the capsule 70 exceeds the interior size of the holding trough 73 in at least one dimension so that some pressure may be required for the removal of capsules 70 from the trough 73. The capsules 70 are further packaged with the use of a cover sheet 72 which functions as the cover member and which is coated in part on one side with an adhesive that removably adheres peripheral and central portions of the cover sheet 72 to corresponding portions of the dispensing tray 71 so as to retain the capsules 70 in a completely enclosed sanitary package. The tray 71 may contain a suitable means for gripping, such as pull tab 75 in one or more corners or along one or more edges for ease in removing the tray 71 from the cover sheet 72.

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In this embodiment, filled packages may be dispensed through a dispenser such as that shown containing a spool and aperture in FIG. 27 or an aperture only as in FIG. 26. Trays 71 may be pulled with tab 75 through access window 81. Alternatively, complete, unused packages may be dispensed through an aperture 82 for immediate or subsequent use and are perforated or scored between single or multiple packages. If complete, unused packages are dispensed through an aperture, then, the user removes capsule 70 by peeling back the tray 71 with the use of tab 73 or a suitable handle or grasping device affixed to the exterior of the tray 71. The user then squeezes the trough 73 to eject the capsule 70 therefrom, 25 as shown in FIG. 25.

In another embodiment, as shown in FIGS. 23 and 24, a thin, burstable film 74, made of paper, plastic, metal foil, or any other suitable material, is adhered to the top surface of dispensing tray 71 so as to form an intermediate layer between cover sheet 72 and dispensing tray 71. In this embodiment, the cover sheet 72 is removably adhered to the film 74. Once the cover sheet 72 is

removed, the user must then squeeze the trough 73 to force the capsule 70 to penetrate or break through the film 74 and eject the capsule 70 from the package for use.

5 For any of the embodiments used in dispensing medication, the dispensing trays may be formed individually or from single or continuous sheets of material. The cover sheets may be spaced or may be formed by cutting, perforating, or scoring of a continuous sheet of material. If multiple dispensing trays are formed from a single piece of material, the material may be perforated or scored between 10 adjacent packages or at other regular or varying intervals to allow dispensing or single or multiple packages of medication.

15 In any of the embodiments for dispensing medication, dosage information may be printed on the surfaces of the cover sheet or dispensing tray. This allows the manufacturer or user to label particular doses. For example, with certain medications, a particular dosage must be taken on each day of the week such that the dosages for different days will differ. In this case, a particular dosage can be labelled for "Monday," "Tuesday," and so forth. These embodiments allow the user to see quickly whether the dosage for a particular day has already been 20 dispensed. This may be particularly helpful in the case of forgetful patients.

25 While the invention has been disclosed with respect to particular embodiments, the applicant does not regard the invention as being limited to such embodiments or applications. It is also understood that this description is not meant to be limiting because further modifications may now suggest themselves to those skilled in the art and is intended to cover such modifications as fall within the scope of the following claims.

CLAIMS:

1. An encased adhesive-coated article combination comprising:
 - 5 a. a support member;
 - b. an adhesive-coated article, said adhesive-coated article including a first adhesive surface, said first adhesive surface having a first adhesive coating covering at least a portion thereof, said adhesive-coated article being removably adhered to said support member by contact of said first adhesive coating, the first adhesive coating between said support member and said first adhesive surface forming a first adhesive bond; and
 - 10 c. a cover member removably attached to said support member to releaseably encase said adhesive-coated article, said cover member including a second adhesive coating covering at least a portion thereof, said cover member being removably attached to said support member by contact of said second adhesive coating with said support member, the contact between said support member and said cover member forming a second adhesive bond.
2. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 1, wherein said 25 second adhesive bond is weaker than the first adhesive bond.
3. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 2, wherein said support member further comprises a nonstick mounting pad.

4. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 1 further comprising a means for gripping attached to said cover member.

5 5. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 4, wherein said adhesive-coated article is an adhesive bandage.

10 6. An assemblage of encased adhesive-coated article combinations comprising:

15 a. a support member;

b. a plurality of adhesive-coated articles, each said adhesive-coated article including a first adhesive surface, said first adhesive surface having a first adhesive coating covering at least a portion thereof, said adhesive-coated article being removably adhered to said support member by contact of said first adhesive coating, the first adhesive coating between said support member and said first adhesive surface forming a first adhesive bond; and

20 c. a plurality of cover members, each said cover member removably attached to said support member to releaseably encase a respective adhesive-coated article, each said cover member including a second adhesive coating covering at least a portion thereof, each said cover member being removably attached to said support member by contact of said second adhesive coating with said support member, the contact between said support member and each said cover member forming a second adhesive bond.

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7. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 6, further comprising a plurality of means for gripping, each said means for gripping attached to a respective cover member.

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8. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 6 wherein the support member further comprises a plurality of nonstick mounting pads.

10 9. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 7, wherein said adhesive-coated articles are adhesive bandages.

15 10. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 8, wherein said adhesive-coated articles are adhesive bandages.

11. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 7, wherein said support member is a sheet.

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12. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 11, wherein said sheet is a continuous sheet.

25

13. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 12, wherein said assemblage is contained in a dispensing unit in a folded configuration.

30 14. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 12, wherein said assemblage is contained in a dispensing unit in a rolled configuration.

15. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 12, wherein said continuous sheet is perforated at predetermined intervals.

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16. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 12, wherein said continuous sheet is perforated between each adhesive-coated article and an adjacent adhesive-coated article.

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17. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 11, wherein said adhesive coated articles are adhesive bandages.

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18. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 12, wherein said adhesive coated articles are adhesive bandages.

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19. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 6, wherein each said cover member is dimensioned to extend beyond the peripheral edges of a respective adhesive-coated article.

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20. An encased adhesive-coated article combination comprising:

a. a support member having a patterned second adhesive coating applied thereto;

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b. an adhesive-coated article, said adhesive-coated article including a first adhesive surface, said first adhesive surface having a first adhesive coating covering at least a portion thereof, said adhesive-

coated article being removably adhered to said support member by said first adhesive coating, the first adhesive coating between said support member and said first adhesive coating, the first adhesive coating between said support member and the first adhesive surface forming a first adhesive bond; and

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c. a cover member removably attached to said support member to releaseably encase said adhesive-coated article, said cover member including a third adhesive coating thereon, said cover member being removably attached to said support sheet by contact of said patterned second adhesive coating with said cover member, the contact between said support member and said cover member forming a second adhesive bond, said cover member further being removably attached to said adhesive-coated article by said third adhesive coating, the third adhesive coating forming a third adhesive bond between said cover member and said adhesive-coated article, said third adhesive bond being stronger than said second adhesive bond.

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21. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 20, wherein said second bond is weaker than said first bond.

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22. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 20, wherein said support member further comprises a nonstick mounting pad.

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23. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 20 further comprising a means for gripping attached to said cover member.

24. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 23, wherein said support member further comprises a nonstick mounting pad.

5 25. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 23, wherein said adhesive-coated article is an adhesive bandage.

10 26. The encased adhesive-coated article combination of claim 24, wherein said adhesive-coated article is an adhesive bandage.

27. An assemblage of encased adhesive-coated article combinations comprising:

15 a. a support member having a patterned second adhesive coating applied thereto;

20 b. a plurality of adhesive-coated articles, each said adhesive-coated article including a first adhesive surface, said first adhesive surface having a first adhesive coating covering at least a portion thereof, each said adhesive-coated article being removably adhered to said support member by said first adhesive coating, the first adhesive coating between said support member and said first adhesive coating, the first adhesive coating between said support member and each said first adhesive surface forming a first adhesive bond; and

25 c. a plurality of cover members, each said cover member being removably attached to said support member to releaseably encase a respective adhesive-coated article, each said cover member including a third adhesive coating thereon, each said cover member being removably attached to said support sheet by contact of said second

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adhesive coating with said support member, the contact between said support member and each said cover members forming a second adhesive bond, each said cover member further being removably attached to a respective adhesive-coated article by a third adhesive coating, the third adhesive coating forming a third adhesive bond between said each said cover member and a respective adhesive-coated article, said third adhesive bond being stronger than said second adhesive bond.

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28. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 27, further comprising a plurality of means for gripping, each said means for gripping attached to a respective cover member.

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29. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 27, wherein said support member further comprises a plurality of nonstick mounting pads.

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30. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 28, wherein said adhesive-coated articles are adhesive bandages.

25

31. The assemblage of encased adhesive coated articles of claim 30, wherein said support member further comprises a plurality of nonstick mounting pads.

32. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 28, wherein said support member is a sheet.

30

33. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 32, wherein
said sheet is a continuous sheet.

5 34. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 33, wherein
said continuous sheet is folded.

10 35. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 33, wherein
said continuous sheet is rolled.

36. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 33, wherein
said continuous sheet is perforated at predetermined intervals.

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37. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 33, wherein
said continuous sheet is perforated between each adhesive-coated article and an
adjacent adhesive-coated article.

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38. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 33, wherein
said adhesive coated articles are adhesive bandages.

25

39. The assemblage of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 37, wherein
said adhesive coated articles are adhesive bandages.

-30-

40. The plurality of encased adhesive-coated articles of claim 27, wherein each said cover member is dimensioned to extend beyond the peripheral edges of said adhesive coated articles.

5

41. An encased sterile article combination comprising:

a. a support member;

10 b. a sterile article; and

c. a cover member removably attached to said support member to functionally encase said sterile article, said sterile article being removably adhered to said cover member.

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42. The encased sterile article combination of claim 41 wherein said sterile article is a medical applicator.

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43. The encased sterile article combination of claim 41 wherein said sterile article is a medical applicator that includes a dispensable medicament.

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44. The encased sterile article combination of claim 41 wherein said sterile article is a unit of medicine.

30

45. The encased sterile article combination of claim 41 wherein said sterile article is a pill, capelet, or capsule.

46. The encased sterile article combination of claim 41 wherein said support member comprises a continuous sheet of molded housings adapted to fittably receive said sterile article.

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47. The enclosed sterile article combination of claim 41 wherein said cover member further includes gripping means.

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48. The encased sterile article combination of claim 41 further comprising a non-adhesive, burstable film disposed between said support member and said cover member, said film being functionally effective to protect the sterility of said sterile article after the cover member has been removed.

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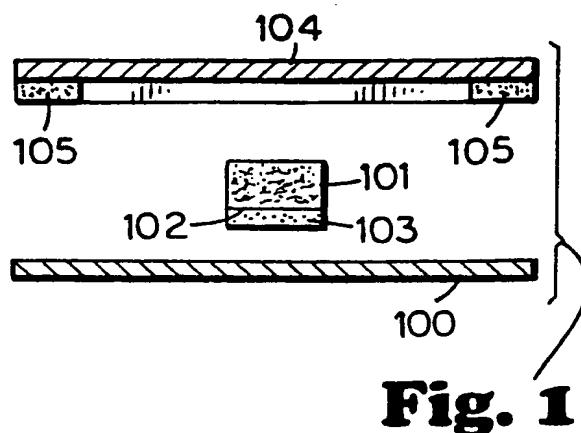
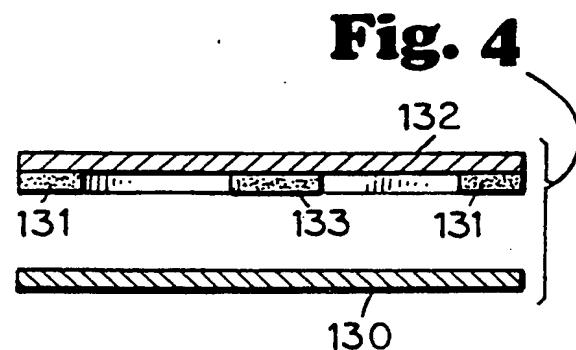
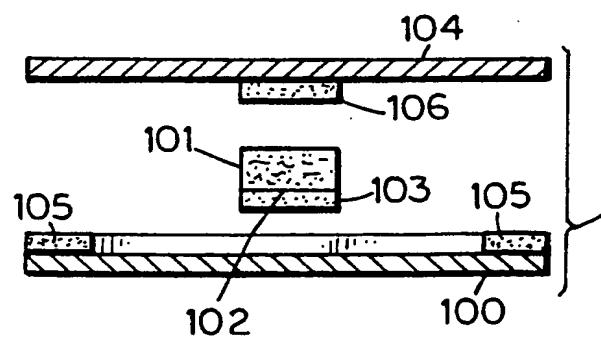
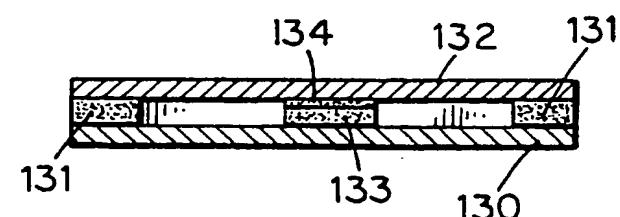
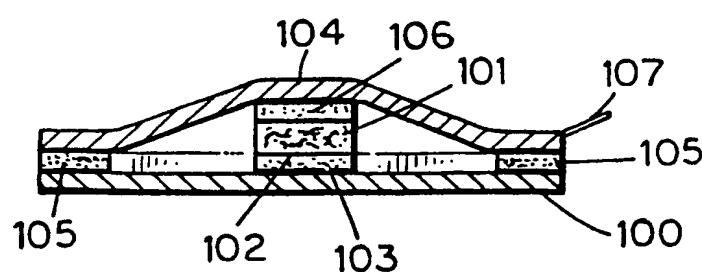
49. An assemblage of encased sterile article combinations wherein said assemblage is contained in a dispensing unit in a folded configuration.

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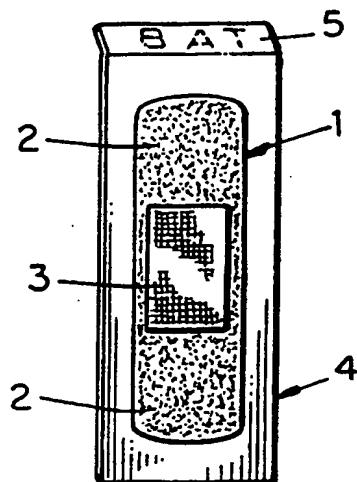
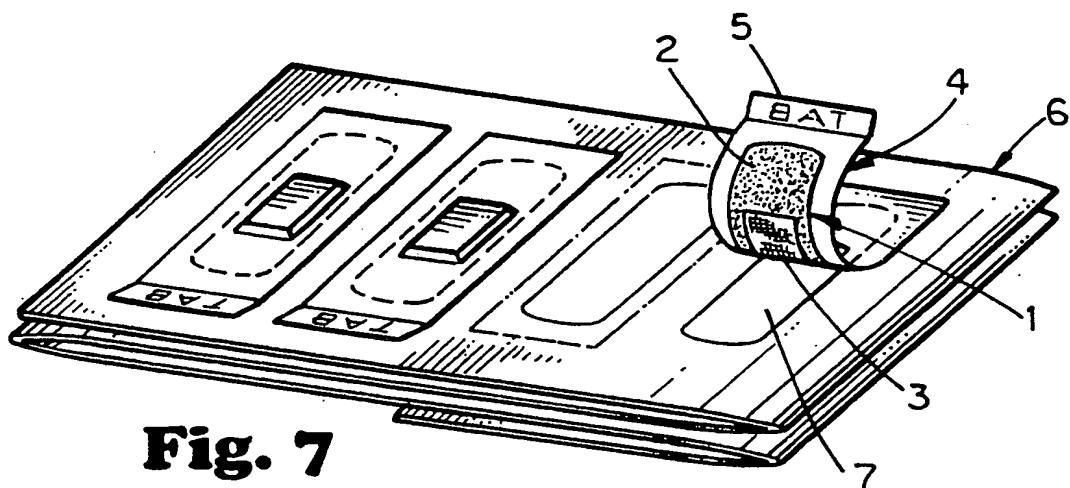
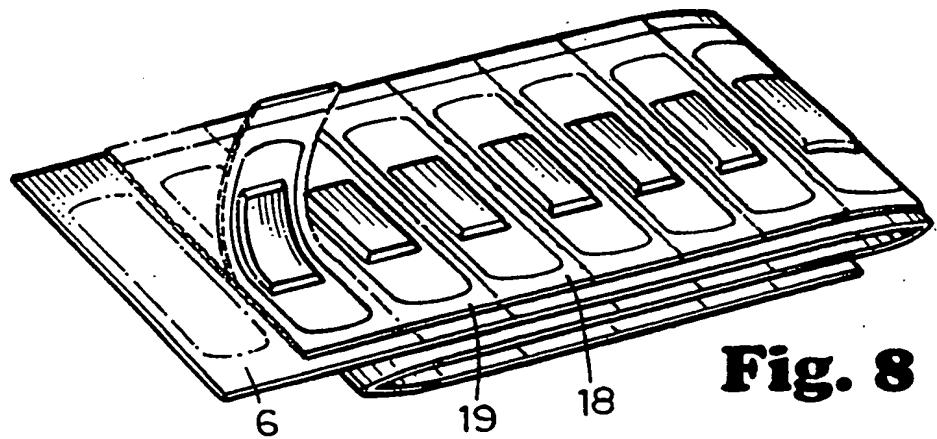
50. An assemblage of encased sterile article combinations wherein said assemblage is contained in a dispensing unit in a rolled configuration.

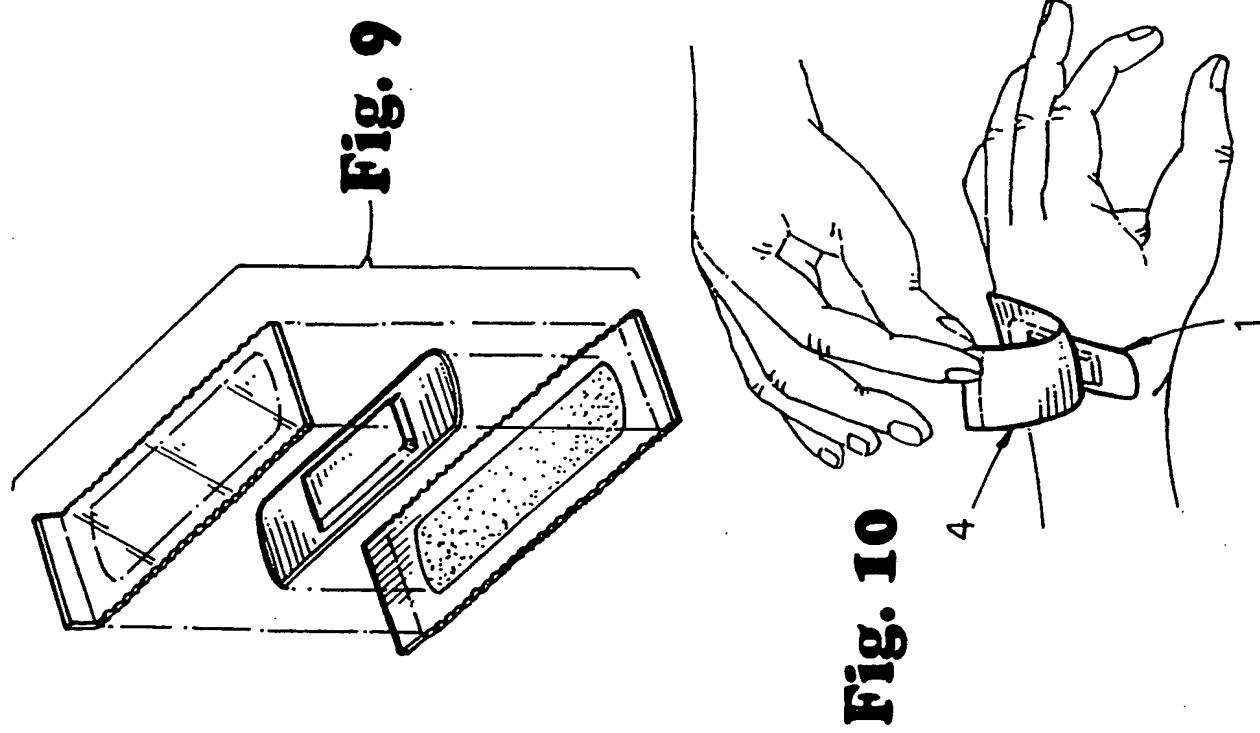
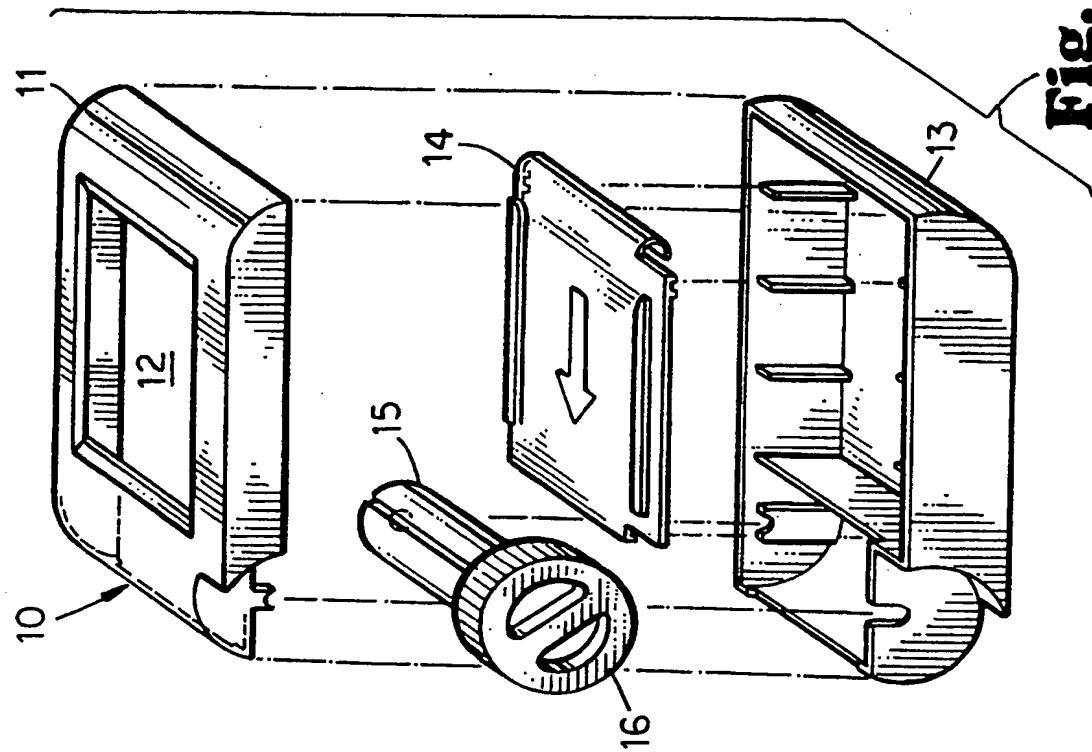
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51. An assemblage of encased sterile article combinations wherein said assemblage is contained in a dispensing unit as individual encased units.

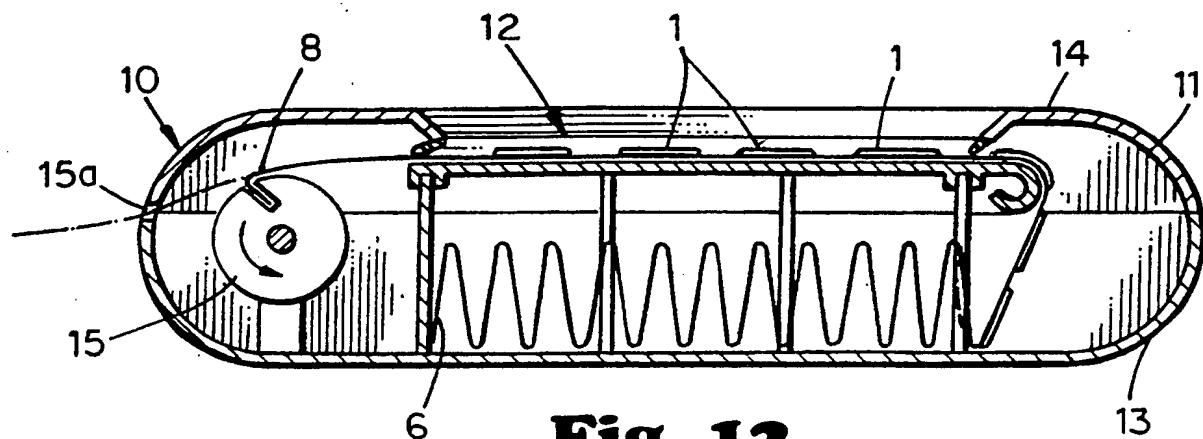
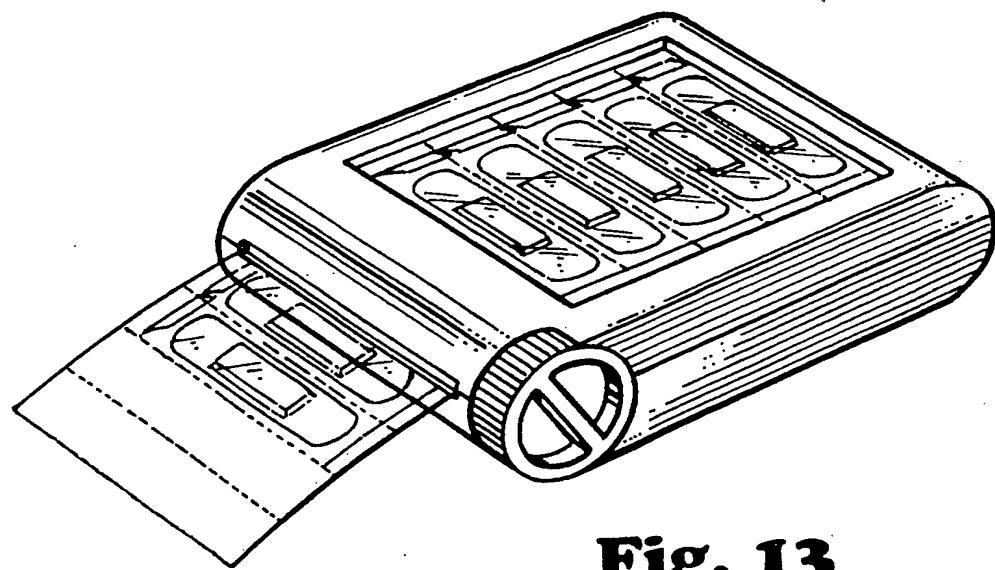
**Fig. 1****Fig. 4****Fig. 2****Fig. 5****Fig. 3**

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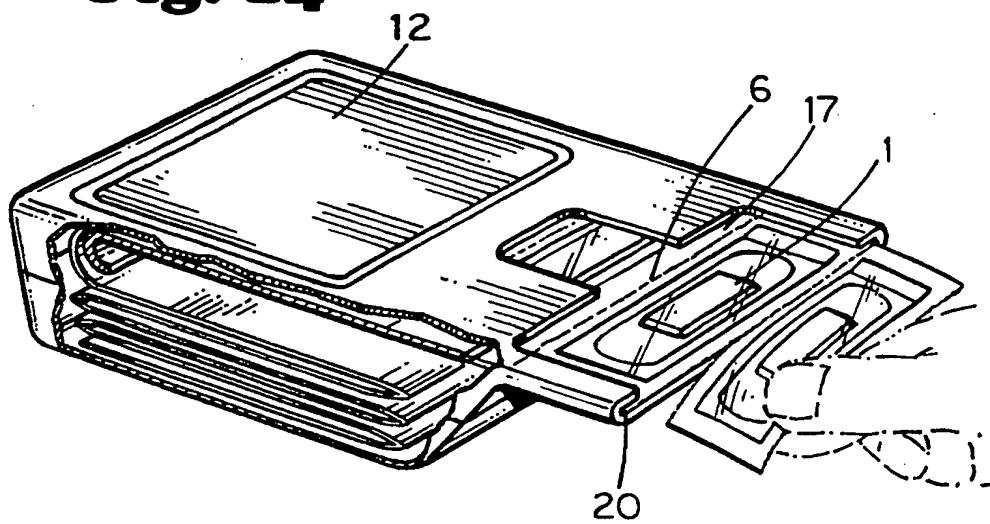
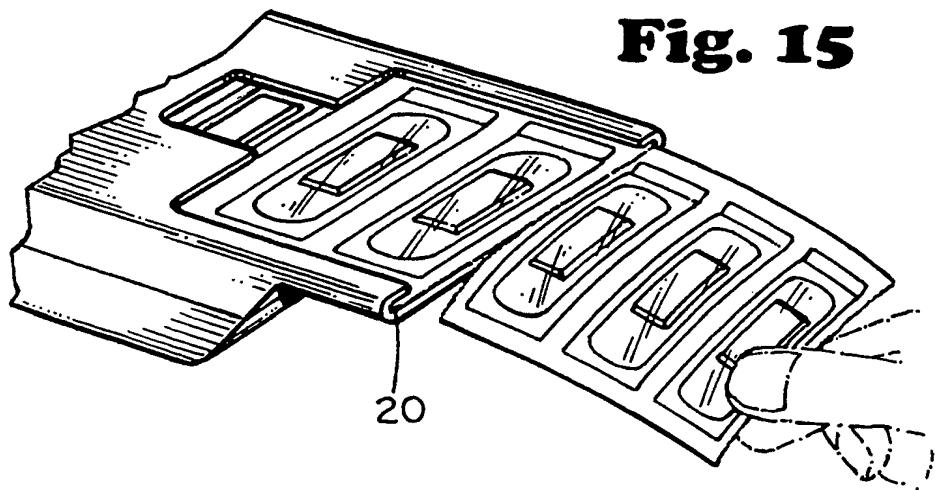
**Fig. 6****Fig. 7****Fig. 8**



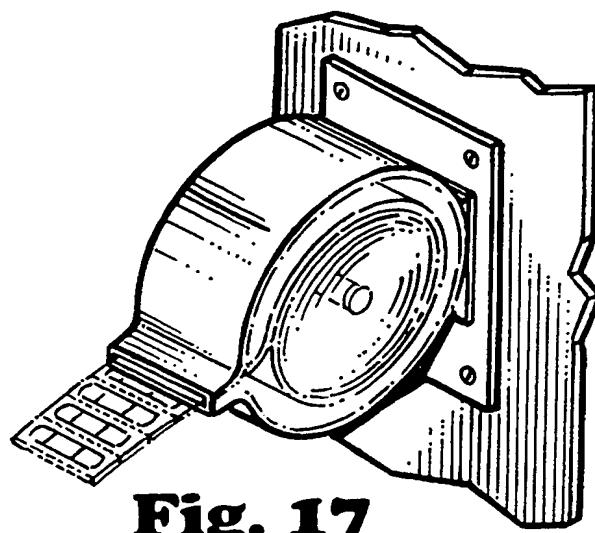
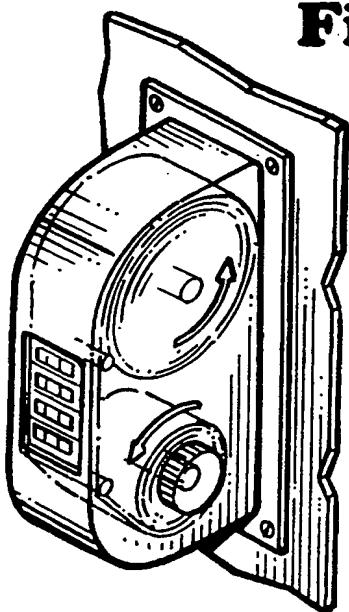
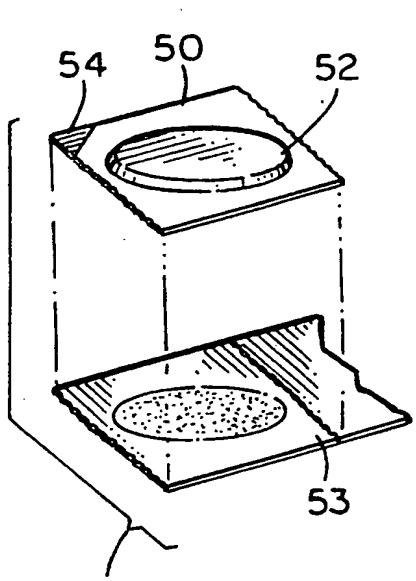
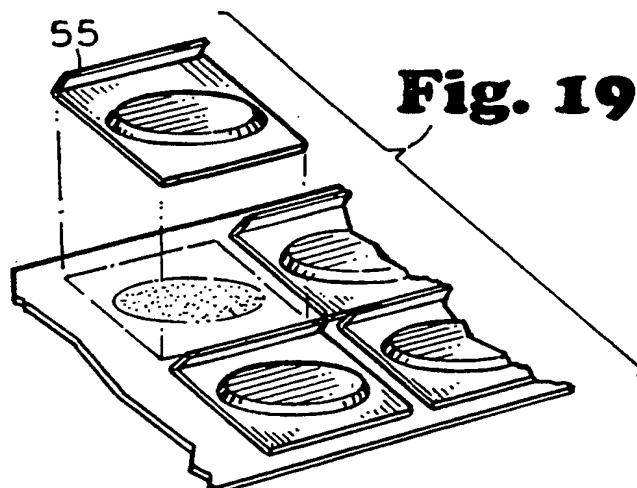
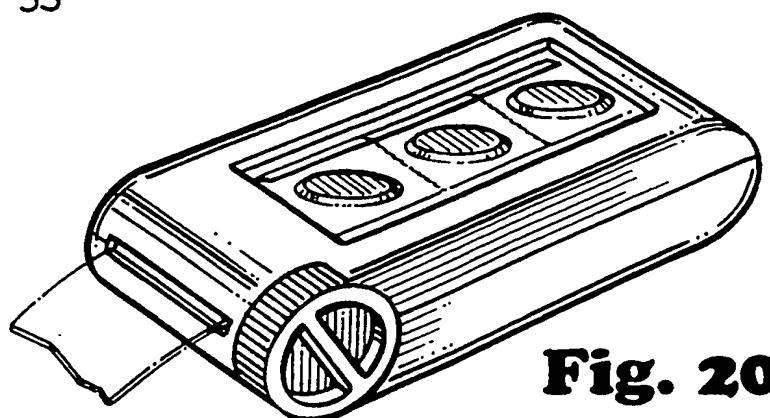
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**Fig. 12****Fig. 13**

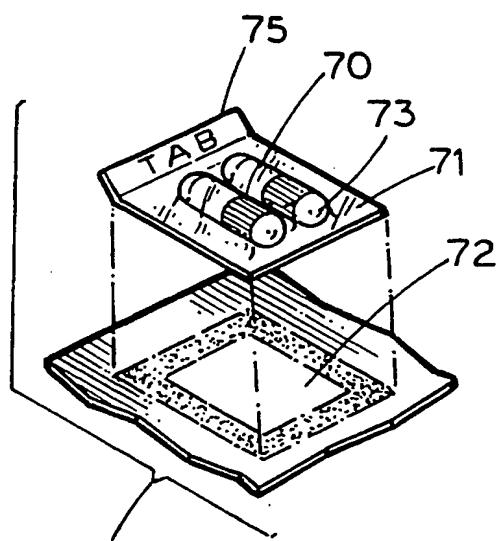
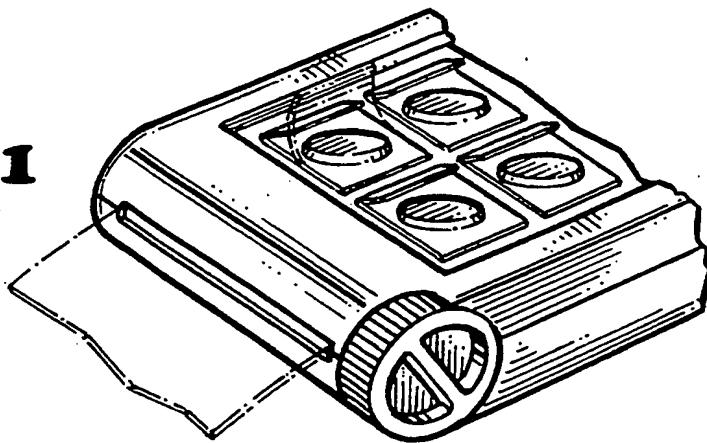
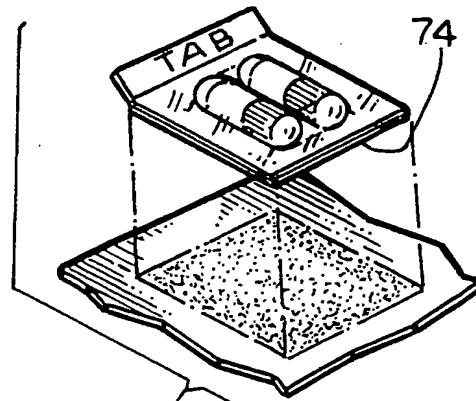
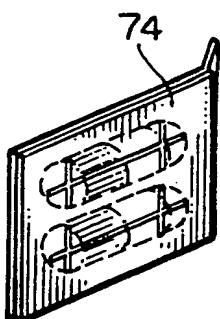
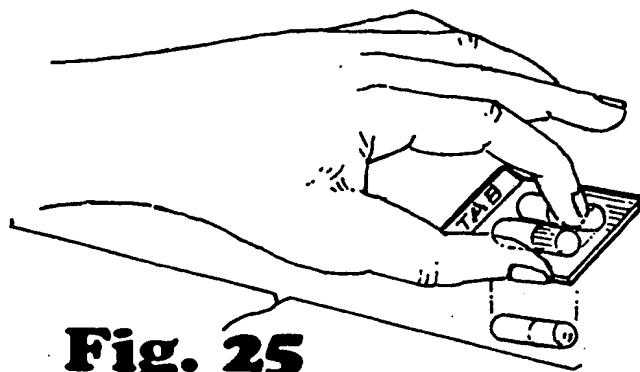
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Fig. 14**Fig. 15**

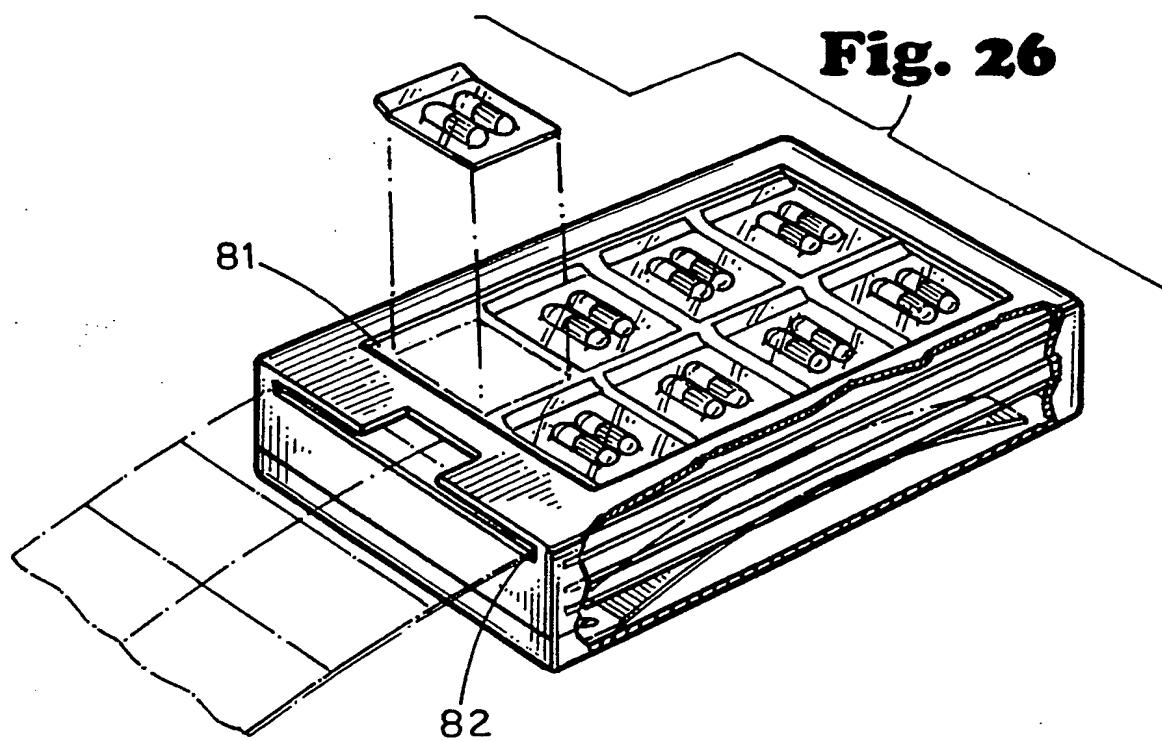
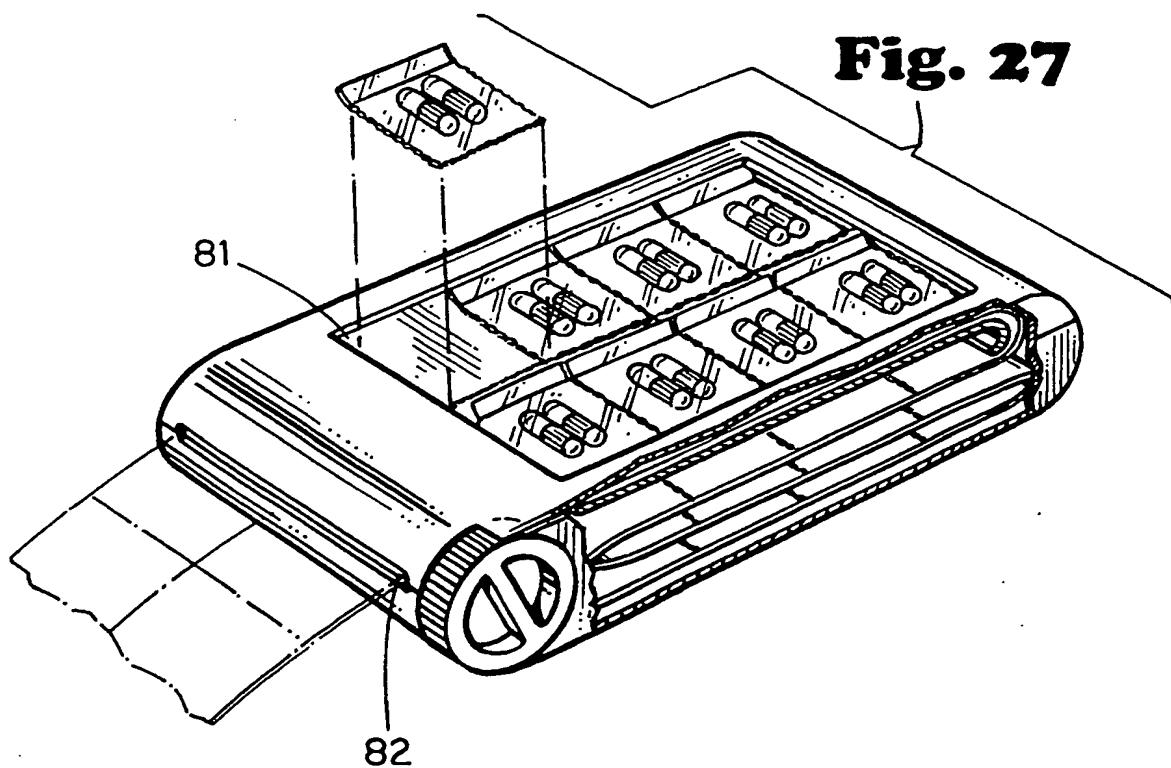
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Fig. 16**Fig. 17****Fig. 18****Fig. 19****Fig. 20**

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Fig. 21**Fig. 22****Fig. 23****Fig. 24****Fig. 25**

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Fig. 26**Fig. 27**

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.

PCT/US94/14885

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC(6) :Please See Extra Sheet.

US CL :206/528, 440, 441

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

U.S. : 206/528, 440, 441, 820, 534.1, 538

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category*	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US, A, 4,265,234 (SCHAAR) 05 May 1991, See the entire document.	1-5, 20-26
Y		6-19, 27-41
X	US, A, 4,807,753 (GOLDSTEIN) 28 February 1989, See the entire document.	50
Y		6-12, 14, 17-19, 27-33, 35, 38, 40

 Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

See patent family annex.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search

03 MARCH 1995

Date of mailing of the international search report

22 MAR 1995

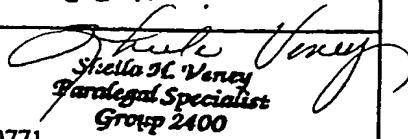
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